Reflections on the Notion of Cooperation

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At birth, human beings are immature, helpless and dependent upon others. Unlike other animals who can survive by themselves after few hours of life, human babies need adults to help them to learn how to live. Yet, humankind survived and adapted perfectly. This is not solely because it has the ability to think and to communicate; it is also because it has the disposition to cooperate with peers in order to reach common aims and to act for the common good. In fact, the essence of human societies — from the smallest cell (families) to the largest one (governments), is found in cooperative groups.

What exactly do we mean by cooperation? Despite the obvious significance of this concept, there has been very little in the way of explicit theorizing. The purpose of this reflection is to sketch out a list of the fundamental criteria of cooperation and to inquire into the possibility of cooperation as a moral value. In the first section of this paper, I will attempt to study the concept of cooperation from a philosophical point of view. From this study should emerge some major criteria.

The second section will concern a particular application of cooperation: cooperation in the classroom. I will survey different existing cooperative methods to explore the possibility of cooperation as moral value. The Philosophy for Children program will be examined as one alternative to foster cooperation among children.

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF COOPERATION

What is cooperation? On the one hand, philosophical literature is not very generous with its definitions of the concept. On the other hand, dictionaries present cooperation as synonymous with collaboration. Moreover, this relationship is corroborated by ordinary language[1], in which both terms are used one for another, indiscriminately. This is why I believe that a preliminary study of the term collaboration should place us on the path of the fundamental elements of cooperation.

a. Collaboration

When we search for definitions, etymology is sometimes of considerable assistance. In reference to the term collaboration, it confronts us with two Latin expressions, that is, *collaborare* (to collaborate on or with; to contribute to) and *laborare* (labour; work). Let us look at the term "work".

From a philosophical perspective, any organized human activity which is executed or performed within an aim of useful production is called "work". This definition carries the notion of usefulness as fundamental value related to work. Yet, whenever the presence of usefulness is

raised, the (specifically) human dimension appears. As Simone De Beauvoir writes: "the word useful calls for a complement and has only one: human being" (1974, p. 161). Human being is always, at once, means (one does not exist without doing and making) and end (one acts in order to grow or to make someone grow) of any useful act.

But, more than human, usefulness may represent the quality of moral activities. If we take into account the point of view of pragmatist philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, usefulness is a component of morality. In *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government* (1968/1910), Mill writes that happiness, which Utilitarians adopted as first criterion of morality does not refer to personal happiness (egocentrism) but to the interest of the whole (altruism). As in the Golden Rule of Jesus of Nazareth — to do to others as one would be done by them and to love others as oneself — the essence of Mill's philosophy is turned towards the common good and is found in the quality of usefulness. There are also the Christian, Humanist and Kantian perspectives (among others) which could corroborate the relationship between usefulness and morality.

But the moral quality of the collaborative work can be argued. First, if to collaborate actually presupposes that the task is done in group (to collaborate with), nothing allows us, on the counterpart, to infer that each person consider her or his collaborators as oneself (in reference to the Golden Rule). Second, although the intransitivity of the term collaboration places us in front of an aim (to collaborate on or to), we cannot deduce from it whether the nature of the aim is egocentric or altruistic (in reference to the Common Good).

These data gathered from the etymology of the word collaboration highlight the possible, yet not obvious, moral component of collaboration and put an emphasis on the search for the Common Good.

Let us continue our conceptual research by studying some existing formulations or definitions of the concept of cooperation.

b. Cooperation

According to Helen Block-Lewis, cooperation implies a state of collectivism which is opposed to individualism: Not to execute a task together, but to realize a common goal to the detriment of personal needs and individual realizations (1944, p. 115-116, quoted by Morton Deutsch, 1949). Just like the Utilitarian conception of morality which looks for the Common Good, and just like the Existentialist conception of morality, which affirms that authentic freedom is possible only when an individual has the (moral) strength to live on in others' freedom[2], the cooperative act, such as defined by Block-Lewis, assumes that a person is capable of losing a bit of oneself to allow the community to live: "The common objective, in other words, is more important than any personal objective" (1944, p. 115-116, quoted by Deutsch, 1949). Cooperation, in this sense, is a moral value and the sharing of common goals represents its prime criterion.

In the continuation of this perspective, one can infer that "to work together" does not necessarily imply cooperation. Indeed, let us take the case of two persons who work, side by side, in the same room. We actually could say they "work together", for physical presence of two or more persons, in a common place, is sufficient to corroborate the working together. But nothing allows us to infer they work cooperatively, for we do not know if these persons realize common objectives (which is the main criterion of Block-Lewis) or not.

Let us take, as second example, two persons who work together, in the same room, at the same production. A priori, one could state that these persons are closer to cooperation than were the characters of the previous example, for these persons have a common task to accomplish. Nonetheless, if the context of their work is, let us say factories, then we could assume that the task of theses persons is complementary, but, once again, nothing proves to us that they are animated by common goals. Therefore, neither physical togetherness nor joint action, nor complementary behavior represent conditions of cooperation. For two or more persons to be said to work cooperatively together, there must be a minimum requirement, that is an inner state or frame of mind which leads each party to a tension or an effort towards a common goal — which signifies, in other words, a diminution of ego.

In this same perspective, C. I. Barnard writes:

> *Among the most important limiting factors in the situation of each individual are his own biological limitations. The most effective method of overcoming these limitations has been that of co-operation. This requires the adoption of group, or non-personal purpose* (1938, p. 60, quoted by Deutsch, 1949).

Let us look at some more definitions of cooperation. According to Morton Deutsch:

> *The crux of the differences between cooperation and competition lies in the nature of the way the goals of the participants in each of the situations are linked. In a cooperative situation the goals are so linked that everybody "sinks or swims" together, while in the competitive situation if one swims, the other must sink* (1973, p. 20).

From Deutsch's point of view, to cooperate means that all participants must go in the same direction, for a change in goal from one of the members might affect the whole group. In other words, it is the relationship to the goals which holds the cooperating individuals together.

We find, in Deutsch's definition, the notion of common goal brought up by Utilitarians and used again by Barnard and Block-Lewis. But Deutsch goes further and explicitly raises the necessity of interrelation and interdependence between the members of a group. Interdependency should not be understood, here, as "contractile" or restricting, but as "promotive", for it characterizes, for Deutsch, "all goal linkages in which there is a positive correlation between the attainments of the linked participants" (1973, p. 20). However, I believe that in real life situations — which involve complex sets of goals and sub-goals — it is rather common to see individuals promotively interdependent in regard with one goal and contractively in regard with another.

M. A. May and L. W. Doob have developed an elaborate theory of cooperation. They consider that:

> *Competition or co-operation is directed toward the same social end by at least two individuals. In competition, moreover, the end sought can be achieved in equal amounts by some and not by all of the individuals thus behaving; whereas in co-operation it can be achieve by all or almost all of the individuals concerned* (1937, p. 6, quoted by Deutsch, 1949).

Their basic postulate with respect to co-operation is as follows:

> *On a social level individuals co-operate with one another when: (a) they are striving to achieve the same or complimentary goals that can be shared; (b) they are required by the rules of the situation to achieve this goal in nearly equal amounts; (c) they perform better when the goal can be achieved in equal amounts; and (d) they have relatively many psychologically affiliative contacts with one another* (1937, p. 17, quoted by Deutsch, 1949).

These definitions, as the previous ones, recognize that the sharing of common goals is primordial in cooperation. However it raises a new aspect: the notion of equality. By "equality", I do not believe one should understand the kind of mathematical equivalence which could be expressed by the sign "= " and which means that one element may be substituted for another. In this context, equality seems rather to claim the recognition of the importance of each party or, more explicitly, the recognition that each member is unique and essential to the success of the group. The last component of their formulation, "they have relatively many psychologically affiliative contacts with one another" appears also as a claim for part-whole relationships between the members. If each one is considered as unique and essential to the success of the group by the others, thus cooperation represents a process which implies respect and acceptance of others' differences — two attitudes of moral value which particularly join the Block-Lewis' representation of cooperation.

All these definitions yield a conception of cooperation as moral value. Before going further in the analysis of this perspective, let us examine a counterpart. According to Ward (In Edwards, 1967), cooperation is an intersubjective union of individuals. And the philosopher clarifies his definition by stating that any reunion, from the simple instinctive aggregation to the reflective search of common social goals, can be placed under the cover of cooperation.

If, in aggregation, the social aspect remains obvious, the moral components we previously found (establishment of common or mutual goals, interdependence, and search for equality in the distribution of the tasks) lose their normative function of criteria. Indeed, aggregation is a reunion of heterogenous elements and it may solely result from external attraction. In this case, although adhesion is sound, it does not follow a diminution of egocentrism for the individual nor a search for harmonization amongst the parties.

As an answer to Ward, John Dewey mentions in *The Public and its Problems*, that human beings do not form a social group only because they live one beside the other:

> *Association itself is physical and organic, while communal life is moral, that is emotionally, intellectually, consciously sustained. Human beings combine in behavior as directly and unconsciously as do atoms, stellar masses and cells; as directly and unknowingly as they divide and repel.[...] They do so from external circumstances, pressure from without, as atoms combine or separate in presence of an electric charge [...] But no amount of aggregated collective action of itself constitutes a community* (1927, p. 151).

In *Democracy and Education*, he writes that in order to live in community, individuals must share common goals, interests and ideologies; they also must share their understanding of things and facts; and they must have similar affective and in-

tellectual predispositions (1983/1916, p. 19). These are Dewey's conditions for community.

Although we recognize, in Dewey's quotation, the same criteria of shared goals and interdependency, one question could be raised here: Are these Dewey's criteria of cooperation? In other words, in the Deweyan perspective, is the concept of community different or equivalent to the one of cooperation? One thing is certain: when Dewey raises the notion of community, he refers to the moral dimension of human beings. Indeed, as it has just been quoted, for him, all "communal life is moral". Actually, Dewey considers that "the moral quality and the social quality of the behavior are, finally, identical" (1983/1916, p. 422).

Still in *Democracy and Education*, in speaking of moral theories, Dewey writes that to be virtuous does not mean to have developed particular attitudes or virtues, but it means to be fully and integrally what one is capable of becoming, by association with others in all the functions of life (1983/1916, p. 421). And, further, he indicates that this association implies "exchange, communication and cooperation" (Dewey, 1983/1916, p. 422). Thus, I believe that the Deweyan criteria concerning community could be used to support our theory of cooperation.

If we come back to these criteria, previously enumerated, we see that Dewey does not only recognize those mentioned by Block-Lewis, Deutsch and May & Doob, but he also advocates that individuals should "share" their understanding of things and facts. From this, a new essential element ensues, namely communication. Indeed, to share, in this particular context, does not merely concern the division and distribution of tasks, but the exchange of ideas, opinions, points of view. Indeed, for Dewey, the sine qua non condition of community (we could substitute the word cooperation) is authentic communication: "Each one should know what the other does, and should have a means to inform the other about his own goal and progress" (1983/1916, p. 19). In this pragmatic perspective, the criterion of common goal, by itself, does not mean anything. What is most fundamental is the verbal exchange about it, for this is the only way amelioration can happen.

Also, in elaborating the conditions of community/cooperation, Dewey asserted that the members of the group should have similar "affective and intellectual predispositions". Let us look, first, at the intellectual dimension of the person, for, since we attempt to define cooperation, it is the first time that reference is explicitly made to intellectual life. In regard to it, Dewey mentions, in *Democracy and Education*, that it is only when people will be "conscious of the common end", that they will form a community (1983/1916, p. 19). I consider that consciousness is an absolutely necessary condition in our reflection about cooperation, for consciousness is the starting point and the ultimate end of any human (moral) activity. Second, consciousness is vital in the elaboration of one's ability to assume the passage from egocentrism to a larger frame of reference. Finally, it is only within the practice of reflection and metareflection that individuals will be able to revise and readjust their mutual objectives, to search for equalitarian relationships, to recognize the necessity of interdependence, to communicate with each other and to become conscious of what they should improve in order to reach the common good.

In reference to the affective dimension of cooperation, I believe that Dewey might be referring to the intrinsic motivation of the members to reach the common end. In *Democracy and Education*, he explicitly mentions the "individual's will to reach the common goals" as a primordial condition to form a community/cooperation (1983/1916, p. 19). Cooperation, like any apprenticeship, requires the will of the person: no one can learn for someone else and no one can cooperate for someone else. This means that the goals to reach must be understood and assimilated by each party — otherwise we could not talk about shared goals, but we would have to talk about submission to a goal established by an external authority. It is only when individuals have integrated the common goals (when the common goals are theirs) that they are ready to work and make efforts to construct and elaborate strategies to reach them. Therefore, an individual's will appears as another fundamental condition of cooperation.

Also, when Dewey raises the affective dimension of the person, he never fails to refer to sympathy and sensitivity. In *Theory of the Moral Life*, he writes:

> *Nothing can make up for the absence of immediate sensitiveness; the insensitive person is callous, indifferent. [...] A person must feel the qualities of acts as one feels with the hands the qualities of roughness and smoothness in objects, before he has an inducement to deliberate or material with which to deliberate* (1980/1908, p. 128).

And he adds:

> *It is sympathy which saves consideration of consequences from degenerating into mere calculation [...] It is the tool, par excellence, for resolving complex situations. [...] Through sympathy the cold calculation of utilitarianism and the formal law of Kant are transported into vital and moving realities* (1980/1908, p. 130).

We can see that, in Dewey's philosophy, the affective dimension constitutes an important criterion to take into consideration. Actually, Dewey advocates the pragmatic perspective of holism (in opposition to the Cartesian dualism):

> *Effective reflection must also terminate in a situation which is directly appreciated, if thought is to be effective in action. "Cold blooded" thought may reach a correct conclusion, but if a person remains anti-pathetic or indifferent to the considerations presented to him in a rational way, they will not stir him to act in accord with them* (1980/1908, p. 127-128).

From my point of view, the holistic dimension highlighted by Dewey here is of prime importance when cooperation stands in a moral perspective. Indeed, whenever we refer to the cooperative acts of sharing, searching for equality, accepting interrelation or exchanging, one needs objectivity as well as sensitivity. Whenever one attempts to be respectful of others' interests and points of view and give them the same weight as one gives to her or his own; whenever one attempts to be impartial in the discussions and in the sharing of tasks, one has to use its intellectual as well as affective dimensions.

In short, the Deweyan concept of community/cooperation implies moral attitudes or values. It takes into account all dimensions of the person (psychological and social, affective and cognitive). It considers the achievement of the common goals as the ultimate end. And it requires intrinsic motivation, consciousness and authentic communication.

Summary

The etymology of the term "collaboration" placed us on the path of cooperation as specific moral attitude (morality was understood in the Utilitarian perspective). Different authors corroborated this thesis in highlighting the following (moral) criteria of cooperation: it presupposes the sharing of common or mutual goals, it implies personal and social interrelations, it supposes the search for equality between the members of the group, and it calls for the affective and cognitive dimensions of the persons — which refers to communication, consciousness, sensitivity and intrinsic motivation.

We must point out that the moral dimension of cooperation which is endorsed in this paper is not a majority view. For instance, according to one author we have studied, mere aggregation of persons might be considered cooperation as well.

We should then verify: Is this (moral) theory of cooperation a utopia? Could the criteria proposed in this paper be experienced in daily activity? Cooperation in the classroom appears as a way to verify this supposition. In the following section of this paper, I will make a brief survey of different existing methods of cooperation in the classroom and see to what point they meet the moral criteria we have proposed.

COOPERATION IN THE CLASSROOM

To educate is to socialize children and to initiate them to their role of citizens. Education constitutes, in its strong sense, a moral education.[3] If it is so, we therefore could expect cooperation to be one of the most fundamental apprenticeship one makes at school. Instead, we realize that school is competitive and individualistic. Most of the time, students work by themselves and they are put in relation with one another only when it is time to compare their outputs.

More and more people involved in education raise objections against the traditional competitive pedagogy. They argue it is counterproductive in almost all aspects (cognitive, affective, social and moral) of apprenticeship. As a result, since the 1970s, different schools gave birth to different cooperative methods. No attempt will be made to summarize the extensive writings on this issue. A quick glance will be made at the best known methods.

a. Existing cooperative methods

The most popular of the cooperative methods are those elaborated by Robert Slavin and his colleagues from John Hopkins University. Let us mention particularly the "Student Teams Achievement Divisions" (STAD) method and the "Teams-Games-Tournaments" method (TGT). There are also the "Jigsaw" method, conceived by Elliot Aronson from the University of California at Santa Cruz, and the "Group Investigation" method, advocated by Shlomo Sharan and Rachel Hertz-Lazarowitz, respectively professors at Tel-Aviv University and at the University of Haifa, in Israel.

Slavin (1991; 1983) considers the following criteria as part of cooperation in the classroom: Members of the group work individually at different aspects of the task; the evaluation of their work is individual and their goal is individual success; the types of task they are asked to achieve involve activities such as the gathering of information, the collecting of data and different types of exercises; these tasks are established and distributed by the teacher; the cognitive processes involved

are memorization, comprehension, problem solving and evaluation of information.

We recognize in this cooperative method that cooperation is rather in means than in goals. And if there is mutual aid between children to achieve the task asked by the teacher, it is within a competitive spirit or context. In this sense, Slavin's cooperative method reflects little or weak cooperation (if cooperation is understood in its moral sense).

In Aronson's method (1980), students work in small groups of five or six members. Each student receives particular information about a given subject. She or he is the only one of the group to possess this element of the jigsaw (puzzle). One individually studies whatever is requested by the teacher in order to become an "expert" in this matter. When one considers she or he has gathered enough data, one meets other experts (in this same field) from other groups and they discuss together to get enriched by the plurality of points of view. This step over, all experts come back to their original group and share with the rest of the members what they know and what they think is essential. Finally, all students pass a test which evaluates each child individually.

I would say that in the Jigsaw approach, the level of cooperation is moderate. It exists in means, not in goals. Group members work individually at different aspects of a task. The "experts" coordinate their activities to some degree, but individual work prevails. The testing also is individual. The mastery of information is provided by the teacher, although it is presented by students. The cognitive processes involved are the following: evaluation of information, initiative in using different sources of information, synthesis of ideas presented by the different experts, understanding of different alternatives.

The Sharan and Hertz-Lazarowitz's method of Group Investigation (1980) is the most complex and it develops in six steps. First, the class identifies the topics it is interested in studying within a particular subject matter (given by the teacher), and children organize themselves in small groups, each group corresponding to a particular topic. The first step corresponds to the Deweyan condition of intrinsic motivation. One can also add that the organization of the classroom into a "group of groups" is an explicit reference to the community life and, in doing so, to personal and interpersonal relationships.

Within the second step, each group plans its specific content and methods of study, as well as the procedures of presentation of the results of its subsequent investigation. Learning, in this sense, is a multifaceted task and the subject matter appears as an authentic social problem with a variety of solutions and perspectives. It presupposes a division of tasks, which itself leads to cooperation, for it calls for interdependence. According to the authors:

> *More appropriate tasks afford a meaningful division of labor that will promote interdependence among group members. Moreover, this interdependence should express itself in a mutual exchange of ideas and contributions to move the group toward its collective goal* (1980, p. 17).

The third step consists in the investigation itself. More than a mere collection of facts, to investigate means to raise problems, ambiguities or missing elements. The process of investigation follows the model of scientific inquiry and it aims at the development of autonomous, critical and creative thinking. It also develops students' autonomy and responsibility, for teachers only act as facilitators of learning and resource persons. The context of investigation is social, for it is based on dialogue and exchange with peers.

The fourth step consists in the preparation of the final report of the investigation, which will have to eventually be presented to the class. Here, also, communication between the members of the group is essential. Moreover, this step requires the capacity to compromise about different opinions and to cooperate in regard with the selection of elements to be presented to the class.

The next step is the report's presentation. Each group shares the results of its research with the rest of the class. The coherence of the presentation is particularly important, for no one else in the classroom knows anything about this particular issue — yet, everyone might be (within the next step) tested about it. So, not only do children have to present their report to their classmates, they also have to master their topic enough to be able to answer any questions coming from them. This step presupposes pedagogical qualities, that is intellectual and affective skills. From the intellectual point of view, children have to master their data, to organize their ideas, to articulate their thinking and to communicate clearly. From the affective aspect, they have to be flexible to adjust to the conditions and the means of the classroom; they also have to be open to the meaning of their peers' questions; they must have enough self-esteem to accept their peers' criticisms; and, finally, they have to be conscious of the importance of their role in the apprenticeship of others.

The last step of the Group Investigation method is with reference to testing and evaluation. Questions for tests are prepared in cooperation with the students and the teacher. The same is

true for the evaluation which is rather a co-evaluation than a grading as in the traditional school system. Children come to understand that testing is a means to help them to be more conscious of what they really are. Co-evaluation and preparation of tests require from students personal responsibility and metaconsciousness.

In short, it appears that in the Group Investigation method, cooperation exists in means and goals — although cooperation in means can vary in degree according to the needs of the task. In this method, all activities done by children are part of a collective effort; members do not individually prepare different aspects of the tasks but do so in small groups; each task presupposes a group-décision (not necessarily consensus); coordination between members is constant; their goal is the success of the group; the task implies activities such as discussions among members, debates and role games involving all members of the group; the cognitive processes involved are related to asking questions, inferring, analyzing, making decisions, problem-solving (Sharan and Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1980, p. 19). In other words, the Group Investigation method appears as a concrete application of the moral theory of cooperation that is advocated in this paper.

Summary

Although our purpose is not to judge the existing cooperative methods, but to describe them, we have to note that there is undoubtedly a scale of variable degrees between the cooperative methods, for some of them even do not meet the prime condition of shared goals, mentioned by the authors quoted in this paper. Nonetheless, the common points we can highlight are the following: all methods are centered on the students (not on the teacher or the program); they give students the opportunity to become more active in their apprenticeships, that is to make choices and decisions; they give students the opportunity to be in interaction with peers.

Many researchers have studied the impacts of these pedagogies on children's apprenticeship and most of the experimentations (compiled in Sharan, 1980) suggest that use of the cooperative methods — whether they consist of low or total cooperation — have a significant impact on student output. More particularly, it has been postulated that the methods of cooperation with a firm structure (STAD or TGT) had more impact on the basic cognitive skills, while methods such as Group Investigation affected more the higher order cognitive skills. Other positive results which were noted: children who work in cooperation gain in self-esteem; they learn to appreciate and to respect their peers; they come to appreciate school more than students who work with the traditional pedagogy; and they developed altruistic values.

So, if not all existing cooperative methods correspond to our moral model, their application in the classroom seems to lead (to one degree or another) to the development of moral attitudes and values.

Parallel to it, could we consider Philosophy for Children — which, on the one hand, is not specifically recognized as a cooperative approach but which, on the other hand, aims at fostering altruistic values and behaviors in children — as a cooperative method? Our postulate is that Philosophy for Children could correspond explicitly to our moral model of cooperation. I will attempt to verify this hypothesis in the next section.

b. Philosophy for Children

As particular school activity, Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp put forward a program of philosophy adapted to children from five to fifteen years old. Its methodology evolves in three steps: the reading of a chapter of a novel, in turn, by children; then the gathering of questions this reading raised in everyone's mind; and finally, the discussion among peers about the topics they chose as important. Let us study each of these steps and see to what point they correspond to our theory of cooperation.

The first step consists in reading a chapter of a novel. Specifically, it is done in turn and aloud. Traditional school programs do not agree with this reading method, for specialists consider that to read aloud is antipedagogical. Yet, in doing so, children practice different dimensions of cooperation: a) in speaking and in listening, they learn reciprocity, tolerance and respect for each other; b) in reading in turn, they get engaged in the sharing of the sentences of the novel, which might lead them to recognize that the parts are necessary to the whole; c) in actualizing a common goal, which is to get together to the end of the story, they learn to decentralize.

The second step of the Philosophy for Children methodology is the gathering of questions that might raise in children's minds after the reading. This second step, also, appears fundamentally different from traditional school pedagogy. Indeed, in the traditional classroom, it is only teachers who are allowed to ask questions. Moreover, teachers' questions are usually related to a kind of testing; they seldom lead to inquiry in common. Traditional school favours the scientific (competitive) model of one question/one good answer. Instead, Philosophy for Children fosters the search for meanings within a community of inquiry. And

the community of inquiry's starting point is found in the students' personal questions.

To formulate pertinent questions is not an easy task. It sometimes might be more difficult than to give answers, for answers can often be found in books. The elaboration of questions, on the contrary, engages one in a personal process of comprehension, assimilation and maturation. The task becomes even more difficult when, like in Philosophy for Children, students are asked to elaborate philosophical questions. These kinds of questions presuppose that one understands the text and can transfer the comprehension to a context of philosophical inquiry. In other words, it presupposes that one can bring to the fore ambiguities, relationships, doubts, problems and uncertainties related to any field of philosophy, that is metaphysics, logic, ethics, esthetics and politic.

A priori, the task of the second step appears as rather individualistic, for the questions which are gathered come from each individual's reflection. But this is true only if we do not take into account the difficulty of formulating philosophical questions which involve higher order intellectual skills such as reasoning, concept formation, translation, and inquiry[4]. In this particular context, children often need the assistance of peers to organize ideas, to clarify concepts, to verify relationships and analogies, and to render questions significant. Cooperation usually appears as a useful means to the success of the shared goal, which is to elaborate together the agenda of class discussions.

The gathering of questions fosters the intellectual as well as affective dimensions of the person. I think the intellectual dimension has been explicitly exposed. Nevertheless, I would add that if children are actually questioning what they read, it signifies that they are involved in a metareflective process. Indeed, one questions when one is conscious she or he does not know; one questions when one is capable of putting oneself in relationship with the unknown. Even if this process is not complete, the questioning activity helps students in this sense. Metareflection represents the starting point of any questioning as well as its result.

All the prementioned intellectual acts are related to the affective dimension of the self. For instance, metareflection cannot happen if it is not preceded or accompanied by the person's will to be transformed. Also, if to think signifies to think critically and creatively[5], therefore to question implies sensitivity towards the other's point of view. The degree of meaningfulness of children's questions is strongly dependent upon their sensitivity, for if they are not sensitive to their own interests, to others' perspectives and to the context, their questions will not be effective or efficient. By effectiveness, it is meant the accomplishment of the shared goal and by efficiency, the satisfaction of individual objectives.

Finally, still in regard to the affective dimension, we should mention that students' questions represent the agenda for the coming discussions. The children are responsible for the agenda of the classroom; the teacher is a resource whose role is to guide children in the philosophical exploration. In this sense, the second step respects also the criterion of intrinsic motivation.

The last step of the Philosophy for Children approach is based on an old pedagogy and, yet, it is provoking a complete revolution in the world of education. It is characterized by the philosophical dialogue within a community of inquiry. A philosophical dialogue is a guided discussion which aims at helping children in the development of personhood[6]. Indeed, to dialogue is not synonymous with to converse or to talk. The term dialogue has its source in the Socratic "dia-logos", which is strongly related to the pragmatic conception of "authentic communication". Dialogue is thus heard in its sense of participation in the reconstruction of personal and social discourse. It involves a search for meaningful exchanges instead of rhetorical argumentations. Moreover, the dialogue of Philosophy for Children is pluralist in its essence. Pluralism, here, does not have to be confused with relativism, for the purpose of the philosophical dialogue is to verify the validity or the pertinence of the existing knowledge, traditions, norms and values (and, from a personal point of view, to verify one's own initial hypotheses, opinions and beliefs) and, if needed, to modify them. Within the philosophical dialogue, children practice thinking in common, they experience communicating in an authentic fashion, and they learn to deal positively with interdependency.

As a corollary, a community of inquiry is not, for the originators of the program, a mere aggregation of students. There is an authentic community of inquiry when children communicate together, that is when they speak and listen, when they give and receive. There is a community of inquiry when each member considers that intersubjectivity is better than mere subjectivity and when each member recognizes the importance of the parts in relation to the success of the whole. In other words, there is an authentic community of inquiry when each child is conscious of the point made by Paolo Freire[7]: "it is not because I think that we think, but it is because we think that I think". Self-esteem, courage, humility, tolerance and acceptance of differences are some of the qualities which gradually develop within the community of inquiry[8].

Another component of the community of inquiry which fosters cooperative (versus competitive) attitudes between the members of the com-

munity of inquiry is that there are no answers not worthy of being considered by the group if it is sincere. Any answer is accepted by the group as long as (a) it is pertinent to the question that is at the agenda of the day and (b) it is justified by sound reasons. Any opinion, point of view or idea which respects these two elements is considered as an enrichment for the community of inquiry. Therefore, when children discuss the meanings of philosophical concepts such as: self, person, friendship, justice, fairness and so on, they do not compete for one right answer (they would have to form a sub-community of inquiry to find the criteria of what is truth), but they join their efforts to define, as precisely as possible, the concept with which they struggle.

Not only are there no wrong answers, but the philosophical community of inquiry does not promote any kind of measurement, testing or grading. It considers that students are responsible, autonomous and intrinsically motivated persons. And, indeed, children participate in the philosophical dialogue because they like to search for meanings, because they like to think for themselves and because they like to be considered as essential to the successful outcome of the community. As a smile calls for a smile, the respect, equality and interdependency which are inherent in the community of inquiry are values which call, in turn, for cooperation in the classroom.

This does not mean that Philosophy for Children is a magic method which instantaneously transforms children into cooperative partners. Cooperation is a human disposition which is developed and constructed through social activities. In other words, it is an attitude which develops as any other: gradually, and by practice. And this is what Philosophy for Children offers to students: the possibility to regularly exercise in living cooperative experiences. And because the context of the community of inquiry is the one of an authentic community (goals to share, to discuss, to aim at; interdependency to organize and constantly readjust; dialogical activities which call for intellectual and affective apprenticeships), children do not consider it as an ordinary academic task which ends at the sound of the bell. On the contrary, they consider it as an alternative way of being and acting which they transfer to the playground and home, and from which they benefit in their daily life[9].

In summary, one can advocate that within its three steps, Philosophy for Children could be considered as a cooperative method, for it respects the following criteria[10]: the apprenticeship is centered on students (not on teachers); it gives children the opportunity to participate to their apprenticeship; it gives them the opportunity to become responsible (to make choices and to make decisions); it favours interrelationships between students; it develops self-esteem and fosters altruism.

Moreover, it appears that Philosophy for Children corresponds to the model of high (moral) cooperation we advocate, for it follows the Utilitarian philosophy in its main objectives and it realizes the conditions raised by Block-Lewis (shared goals and diminution of ego), Deutsch (shared goals and interdependency), May & Doob (shared goals and search for equality), and Dewey (shared goals, authentic communication, metaconsciousness, sensitivity and intrinsic motivation).

CONCLUSION

Can we then conclude, first, concerning the concept of cooperation, that an opening has been made in regard to the moral aspect of the concept and some fundamental criteria have been elaborated? Second, in reference to the application of this moral theory of cooperation, that a study of different existing cooperative methods in the classroom has begun? Some of them showed very low cooperation. The Group Investigation method seemed to respect the moral criteria that have been brought up in this paper, that is, shared goals, search for equality, interdependence between members, intrinsic motivation, authentic communication, sensitivity to others and consciousness. Third, that the Philosophy for Children program is a possible method for fostering cooperation in the classroom? Analysis showed that it not only meets the fundamental conditions of the existing cooperative methods, but that it follows the paradigm of cooperation as moral value.

NOTES

1. One can read: Austin, John Langshaw (1970).
2. See: De Beauvoir, S. (1974) and Sartre, J. P. (1968).
3. One could refer to: Reboul, O. (1971). La philosophie de l'éducation. Paris: PUF; (1977). L'endoctrinement. Paris: PUF; (1980). Qu'est-ce qu'apprendre?. Paris: PUF.
4. For an analysis of these higher order thinking skills, one can refer to: Lipman, M. (1991).
5. See: Lipman, Matthew, 1992.
6. See Sharp, A. M. 1993; Sharp, A. M., 1992 and Sharp, A. M., 1985.

7. Although Freire is strongly inspired by the Marxist theory, many aspects of his philosophy, as well as his pedagogy, reflect the Pragmatist influence.
8. These results are not merely theoretical inferences; they emerge from the regular evaluations that primary school teachers make about the impact of Philosophy for Children on students' moral behaviors and values.
9. Once again, these words are not pure extrapolation; they reflect children's own comments.
10. In reference with the criteria that have already been mentioned in this paper, in regard with the cooperative methods: p. 17.

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